

Apple Consultants Network

The Apple Consultants Network (ACN) is a community of independent, local IT service providers who specialize in enabling Apple technology. ACN members offer a variety of onsite technical services for consumers and businesses. Each members skills have been vetted by Apple. They work with customers to consult, train, set up, and support their technology needs. Consultants offer their services for a fee, which varies depending on their business model.

Table of Contents

Overview	2
Types of ACN member businesses	2
Finding the right consultant	3
ACN Networking Meetings	5
Sample Invitation Text	8
Local ACN Profiles Worksheet	9
When to engage the Apple Consultants Network	10
Apple Business Affiliate Program	11
Potential ACN Candidates	13
Frequently Asked Questions	15
Resources	17

Overview

This guide will show you how to help a customer locate and choose the right ACN for their needs. You'll also discover when to engage an ACN member and the best ways to connect them with your customer.

Types of ACN Member Businesses

ACN members specialize in different areas and utilize different business models. They have different areas of expertise, including:

Deployment, integration, management, and support for Mac and iOS devices—including Mobile Device Management (MDM) and Device Enrollment Program (DEP) support. Proficiency in server, networking, wireless, security, and cloud service solutions

- App development
- Remote help desk support
- Setup, installation, and consultation services for consumers/home users

Some ACN members may focus on specific services or solutions, such as:

- Troubleshooting: focuses on fixing problems that occur in home or small office
- Project support: provides specialized skills and knowledge to implement desired solution
- MSP (Managed Service Provider): outsourced IT management, acts as the company's IT department and provide proactive service and support
- Solution: specializes in implementing a specific solution, e.g., point of sale (POS)

Finding the Right Consultant

Using the ACN Locator

The ACN Locator is a customer-facing tool used to help you and your customers find ACN members in your community. It is available at consultants.apple.com or via the Search the Apple Consultants Network link on apple.com/retail/business.

To use the ACN Locator:

- Enter a zip code/postal code or city, state.
- Click Search.
- Review the results—they will show how many ACNs are available within 100 miles (U.S. and Canada) of your search location. They will be sorted by distance, so be sure to review your options on the other pages.

Refining your search

Each of your customers has personalized needs and goals and may need consultants with specialized skills and capabilities. To search for consultants with specific knowledge:

- Navigate to consultants.apple.com.
- Select a product focus area (e.g., Mobility).
- Click Find a [product focus] consultant.
- Enter a zip code/postal code or city, state.
- Click Search.
- The search results will be tailored to only include consultants who provide services around the product area you selected.

Filtering your search

Filtered searches help you and your customer narrow your consultant options to only those who fit a specific service profile. You can add multiple filters and sort options to improve the results. To filter your search:

- Navigate to consultants.apple.com.
- Click Find a Consultant.
- Enter a zip code/postal code or city, state.
- Click Search.
- Click Filters.
- Select the Sort by and .Services options you need.

Review your list of consultants using the .See Company Profile link next to each option.

Using the Company Profiles

Each ACN's company profile page provides a wealth of information. This includes:

- Number of consultants tracked and verified by Apple
- List of locations
- Headquarters
- Website URL
- Ratings & Reviews written by customers and approved by Apple
- Solution areas the ACN is able to support
- List of certifications validated by Apple

After you create an initial list of ACN members with the ACN Locator, review the company profiles to help select the right candidate for your customer.

ACN Networking Meetings

Hosting an ACN Networking Meeting is a great opportunity for store teams to identify go-to ACN members in your community and promote ongoing collaboration. This meeting brings together multiple ACN members to meet with your market-wide Business Team. You will meet ACN members in your community, gain knowledge on their technical capabilities and solution offerings, and better understand how to position ACN services to customers. The meeting is for the ACN community and Apple Business Teams to come together. This is not a customer-facing event.

Getting started

To hold an ACN Networking Meeting, the Business Events Lead or Business Leader should send an email to the ACN program team at acn@apple.com. The program team will work closely with them to help coordinate meeting logistics, send invitations to generate consultant attendance, and provide ongoing support as you develop relationships with your ACN community.

Meeting location and time

Select a store location that is easily accessible for all Business Teams in your market. If your market does not have a Briefing Room, hold the meeting on the store floor prior to store opening.

Invitations to the ACN community should be sent out at least 30 days before the meeting date. See the Sample Invitation Text for an example.

Attendance

Market

- Business Leader
- Business Managers
- Business Events Lead (where available)
- Solutions Engineer (where available)
- Market Leader (optional)

Hosting Store

- Store Leadership
- Business Specialists

Specialists, Experts, or Family Room team members from the hosting store may add value to the meeting. Partner with your Business Leader to determine who should attend and how they can participate.

Agenda topics

The ACN program team has developed suggested agenda topics that will assist in the success of your meeting. The topics provided should be used as a guide, and customization is encouraged based on the topics most important to your market. Partner with your Business Leader to determine the agenda for your meeting.

Welcome and introductions

- The Business Leader is the moderator for the meeting.
- Welcome the group and outline your objectives for the meeting.
- Apple attendees introduce themselves and share which store(s) they support.

Business Market Overview

- Share local market updates with ACN community, examples include:
 - Educate ACN members on your local business needs
 - Update on structure and market support
 - Discuss focus on community
- Share best practices for partnering with Apple

Apple Store Services

- Provide overview of services and how ACN members can position as a compliment to their own.
- Examples of services to review:
 - Briefings, Business Events, and Workshops
 - Apple Financial Services and Leasing
 - Genius Bar support (AppleCare)
 - Apple Renew
 - Joint Venture

ACN Member Introductions

- Each ACN member will introduce themselves and provide a brief overview of their business model and services, 3–5 minutes is the suggested amount of time for each ACN member.
- Your local ACN members can help you learn more about your community. Ask questions about the types of customers they are working with and discover how Apple can support with Briefings or events.
- Use the *Local ACN Profiles Worksheet* to take notes and capture information about the ACN members business model, customer demographic, vertical markets, and technical proficiencies.

Closing and Wrap-up

- Wrap up with call to action for next steps, examples include:
 - Host ACN member at your store to meet rest of Business Team.
 - Set up meeting in store with ACN member and their customer(s).
 - Invite ACN member to present to store teams on solutions or participate in a workshop.
 - Thank group for attending and kick off networking.

Networking and Q&A

- ACN members and Apple team should use this time to network, discuss next steps, and answer any outstanding questions.

Sample Invitation Text

Subject: ACN Networking Meeting

We are pleased to invite you to an exclusive networking meeting for our local ACN community. The meeting will provide a platform to network and engage with the local Business Teams, as well as hear from the Apple Business Leader and representatives from the ACN program. Additionally, each ACN member will have the opportunity to share a brief overview of their business and services.

When: Wednesday, October 14, 2015

Time: 7:30–9:00 a.m.

Location:

Apple Store, San Francisco

One Stockton Street

San Francisco, CA 94108

Agenda:

- Apple introductions and meeting objectives
- Apple business updates
- ACN member introductions
- Networking

To confirm your attendance, please register [here](#). If you would like to send multiple attendees, please have each complete a separate registration. Once we receive your confirmation a member of the ACN program team will reach out to discuss key points to review in your ACN introduction.

We look forward to seeing you on October 14.

Sincerely,

Apple Consultants Network Program Team

Post-meeting milestones:

Timing	Milestones
Within one week	Encourage ACN members to share customer opportunities.
Within one month	Schedule appointments with ACN members in store to learn more about their services and meet the Business Team. Invite ACN member to participate in a Briefing (when beneficial). Invite ACN member to support relevant store workshops and events. Arrange a meeting with your Solutions Engineer (if available).
Quarterly	Continue to host networking meetings with your ACN community.
Ongoing	Record experiences with ACN engagements in Local ACN Profiles Worksheet.

Local ACN Profiles Worksheet

Use the *Local ACN Profiles Worksheet* to capture detailed notes about the ACN members you've met in your community. This tool will supplement the information in the Company Profiles section of the ACN Locator tool. Recording experiences with each ACN member helps quickly identify the best options for future customer engagements.

When to Engage the Apple Consultants Network

Discuss ACN options early in your customer conversations. As you discover more about your customer, think about their goals and what they need to implement them.

- Does the customer currently have IT resources?
- Is the customer willing to pay for services?
- How does the customer plan to use and implement new products in their business?

Customers that need basic IT support and implementation

- Use the ACN locator on consultants.apple.com to quickly find an ACN member.
- Share the link to the locator with your customer or review the site together to find ACN members.
- Refer to the Locate Members section of this guide for a complete overview on how to use this resource.

Customers working on complex or long-term projects

- Introduce customers with the best-matched ACN members rather than using the locator.
- Provide options and let the customer decide which ACN member is best for their business.

Briefings:

Some customer opportunities may benefit from having an ACN member present for a Briefing. During a Briefing, the ACN member should provide input for implementation and support after the sale.

- Only ACN members with previous positive experiences with our customers should participate in Briefings.
- We provide all content such as Keynote slides.
- Ensure the ACN is aware of Briefing guidelines prior to participation.
- Conduct a pre-Briefing meeting with the ACN member and other internal participants.

Pre-Briefing topics should include:

- Discussion of the completed Business Brief (share the Brief with internal partners only)
- Potential solutions that will be presented to the customer
- Previous interactions the ACN member has had with customer
- Common concerns in the customer's industry
- Relevant scenarios the ACN has encountered

Apple Business Affiliate Program

Apple Business Affiliate is a deal registration program available to members of the Apple Consultants Network in the U.S. and Canada. It encourages ACN member businesses to introduce their customers to the Apple Store and the Affiliate program provides a financial incentive. Affiliates receive 3 percent commission on all completed transactions. Working together, the ACN and the Business Team will stay connected throughout the sales process. This creates a cycle of incoming introductions, successful sales, great support, and loyalty.

How it works

ACN members connect with Business Teams on customer requests through an RFQ (Request for Quote) process. ACN members engage with a member of the Apple Business Team to provide products and services for the customer. Leads are submitted through a Lead Form on the ACN Private Member Portal and ACN members work directly with Apple to provide hardware to the customer. For each customer lead that ends in a sale, the ACN will earn a 3 percent commission.

Business Affiliate Process

Each Affiliate lead originates from an Affiliate request for quote form (RFQ). Once submitted, the Business Market Specialist (BMS) Team is assigned the lead and enters it as an Opportunity in Engage.

Sometimes the ACN will choose to bring the customer to the store to meet with the Business Team, or will have you contact the customer directly to coordinate a purchase.

Goals

- Accountability and trackable leads
- Seamless Apple sales experience for the customer
- Positive relationship building between ACN and Business Teams

Exceptions

- Booked orders cannot be attached to a RFQ retroactively
- Immediate pickup/same day sale is not eligible for the RFQ process

RFQ Procedure

1. BMS Team creates the RFQ opportunity in Engage for the End User (not ACN).
 - RFQ ID (ACNBA#) must be entered into the Opportunity name.
 - Do not change or modify the Opportunity name.
2. The Opportunity is assigned to the Business Manager.
3. The Business Manager assigns a follow up task for the Business team.
4. Business Team contacts the ACN before calling the customer.
 - If a customer contacts you about exchanging items purchased from an RFQ, use the previous RFQ ID in the new Engage opportunity.

Potential ACN Candidates

The ACN program is intended for companies who generate most of their revenue by delivering technical consulting, implementation, training, and support services. Understanding Apple's requirements for participation and the profile of an ideal ACN member will assist you when speaking to potential candidates. If you have companies or individuals interested in joining, see the information below to assist them.

Program Requirements

- Obtain minimum certification requirements:
 - Information on ACN certification requirements can be found [here](#). Share this with potential candidates.
 - Certifications provide each member the necessary deployment methods and best practices for both iOS and OS X.
- Hold \$1M general business liability insurance
- Complete a background screen conducted by an Apple-approved resource
- Not be employed by Apple in the past 12 months
- Willing to pay annual membership fee

Ideal Candidates

- Generate revenue from service, support, and implementation
- Possess clearly defined business and go-to-market strategy
- Knowledge of Apple technology and our ecosystem
- Be able to work in multi-platform environments
- Use resources to support different types of customers
- Invest in Apple training and any required certifications
- Understand the customer journey through Apple Business Teams
- Have strong interpersonal skills

Questions for Potential Candidates

Use these questions to help identify if companies are a fit.

- How do you generate revenue for your company?
- What type of support and service do you offer?
- What kinds of customers do you work with?
- Are you committed to investing in Apple training and certification programs?
- What is your knowledge of Apple technology and our ecosystem?

If you believe the company would be a potential candidate for the program, direct them to consultants.apple.com/join for more information or connect with the ACN program team at acn@apple.com.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the best way to find a consultant with a specific skill?

Use the ACN website and apply solution filters to the search process. You may choose a combination of filters to refine your search.

The ACN member we work with the most isn't on the ACN Locator. Why?

The ACN Locator only includes member companies whose certifications are verified as current, meaning certifications pertaining to the latest product release or two previous versions. For example, when OS X El Capitan certifications are current we will also accept OS X Yosemite or OS X Mavericks. Members whose certifications have become obsolete will be reinstated as soon as they submit up-to-date certification information.

How do you determine which solutions the ACN member can support?

Solution areas attributed to the ACN member are driven by certifications or training credentials that the ACN program team can track and verify.

I have a customer who needs support at multiple locations, how do I determine the best ACN options to consider?

The ACN program team can help locate ACN members that support complex scenarios such as multisite deployments. Contact them at acn@apple.com to explore the options.

What if the ACN member is a reseller, can we still work with them?

Very few ACN members are Apple Authorized Resellers. Many ACN members hold their reseller authorization to service specific types of customers (e.g., government), but typically these members will work closely with you to obtain a new customer for service and support. They may also choose to resell related software solutions. Determine the best way to work with ACN resellers in your market.

Where do the Ratings & Reviews come from?

The Ratings & Reviews are generated by the clients of our ACN members and are approved by the ACN program team.

Some ACN members have no ratings, does this mean they are not any good?

Some ACN members invest time in cultivating their client relationships and seeking out feedback. We have generally found that ACN members who have received customer reviews, greatly increase their probability of selection.

How do you ensure the Ratings & Reviews are legitimate?

ACN members typically solicit reviews from their clients. We have taken some steps to promote credibility by requiring reviewers to log in using Apple IDs to submit a review. We also monitor both the content of the reviews and how many reviews an individual may have written. Generally we don't allow visitors to leave more than one review per consulting company, per year. If a second review adds new information, for example the customer leaves a positive review then a negative review as the experience changes, we will accept the new information.

Resources

- <http://consultants.apple.com>: The Apple Consultants Network landing page provides a quick overview of the approved ACN members in your community. It does not provide any information about their business model and technical expertise.
- ACN Networking Meeting Keynote Template: Business Events Leads or Business Leaders should adapt this Keynote to present during ACN Networking Meetings. (BEL or BL only)

ACN Program Team Contact Information

- The ACN program team is available to help answer any questions and support you work with ACN Community.
- Contact the ACN program team at acn@apple.com.